



M. de Voltaire

J. O. Amos 1

M A H O M E T

T H E

I M P O S T O R:

A

T R A G E D Y.

FROM THE FRENCH OF

M. De VOLTAIRE.

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W. H. O. H. A. M.

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P R O L O G U E.

Spoken by Mr HAVARD.

*TO point what lengths credulity has run,
What counsels shaken, and what states undone;
What hellish fury wings th' Enthusiast's rage,
And makes the troubled earth one tragic stage;
What blasphemies Imposture dares advance,
And build what terrors on weak ignorance;
How fraud alone rage to Religion binds,
And makes a Pandemonium of our minds;
Our Gallic Bard, fir'd with these glorious views,
First to this Crusade led the tragic muse;
Her power through France his charming numbers bore,
But France was deaf—for all her priests were sworn,
On English ground she makes a firmer stand,
And hopes to suffer by no hostile hand.
No clergy here usurp the free-born mind,
Ordain'd to teach, and not enslave mankind;
Religion here bids Persecution cease,
Without, all order, and Within, all peace;
Truth guards her happy pale with watchful care;
And Frauds, tho' pious, find no entrance there.*

*Religion, to be sacred, must be Free;
Men will suspect—where Bigots keep the key.
Hooded and train'd like Hawks, th' Enthusiasts fly,
And the priest's victims in their pounces die.
Like whelps born blind, by mother-church they're bred,
Nor wake to Sight, to know themselves misled:
Murder's the game—and to the sport unprest,
Proud of the Sin, and in the Duty blest,
The Layman's but the Blood-bound of the priest.
Who'er thou art, that dar'st such themes advance,
To priest rid Spain repair, or slavish France;
For Judas' hire there do the devil's task,
And trick up Slavery in Religion's mask.
England still free, no surer means requires
To sink their sottish souls, and damp their martial fires.*

*Britons, those numbers to yourselves you owe;
Voltaire hath strength to shoot in Shakespeare's bow:
Fame led him at his Hippocrene to drink,
And taught to write with nature as to think:*

*With English freedom, English wit he knew,
 And from th' inexhausted stream profusely drew.
 Cherish the noble bard yourselves have made,
 Nor let the frauds of France steal all our trade.
 Now of each prize the winner has the wearing,
 E'en send our English stage a privateering :
 With your commission, we'll our sails unfold,
 And from their loads of dross, import some Gold.*

Dramatis Personæ.

MAHOMET.

MIRVAN, his General.

ALI,

HERCIDES,

AMMON,

}

Officers of Mahomet,

ZAPHNA, Captive brought up under Mahomet.

ALCANOR, Chief of the Senate of Mecca.

PHARON, his Friend.

PALMIRA, } Captive brought up with Zaphna
 under Mahomet.

SCENE, MECCA.

M A H O M E T

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ACT I. SCENE I.

SCENE, *an Apartment in the Temple of Mecca.*

Enter ALCANOR and PHARON.

ALCANOR.

— PHARON, no more — Shall I
Fall prostrate to an arrogant impostor,
Homage in Mecca one I banish'd thence,
And incense the delusions of a rebel!
No — blast Alcanor, righteous Heav'n! if e'er
This hand, yet free and uncontaminate,
Shall league with fraud, or adulate a tyrant.

Pha. August and sacred chief of Ishmael's senate,
This zeal of thine, paternal as it is,
Is fatal now — our impotent resistance
Controuls not Mahomet's unbounded progress,
But, without weak'ning, irritates the tyrant.
When once a citizen, you well condemn'd him
As an obscure, seditious innovator:
But now he is a conqu'ror, prince and pontiff,
Whilst nations numberless embrace his laws,
And pay him adoration — Ev'n in Mecca
He boasts his proselytes.

Alc. Such proselytes
Are worthy of him — low, untutor'd reptiles

In whom sense only lives——most cred'lous still
Of what is most incredible !

Pha. Be such

Disdain'd, my Lord; but mayn't the pest spread up-
wards,

And seize the head——say, is the senate sound?
I fear some members of that rev'rend class
Are mark'd with the contagion, who, from views
Of higher pow'r and rank, or canker'd with
The gangrenous defilement of a bribe,
Worship this rising sun, and give a sanction
To his invasions.

Alc. If, ye powers divine !

Ye mark the movements of this nether world,
And bring them to account, crush, crush those vipers,
Who, singled out by a community
To guard their rights, shall, for a grasp of ore,
Or paltry office, sell 'em to the foe.

Pha. Each honest citizen, I grant, is thine,
And, grateful for thy boundless blessings on them,
Would serve thee with their lives; but the approach
Of this usurper to their very walls
Strikes 'em with such a dread, that ev'n these
Implore thee to accept his proffer'd peace.

Alc. O people, lost to wisdom, as to glory !
Go, bring in pomp, and serve upon your knees
This idol, that will crush you with its weight,
Mark, I abjure him: by his savage hand
My wife and children perish'd, whilst in vengeance
I carry'd carnage to his very tent,
Transfix'd to earth his only son, and wore
His trappings, as a trophy of my conquest.
This torch of enmity, thus lighted 'twixt us,
The hands of time itself can ne'er extinguish.

Pha. Extinguish not, but smother for a while
Its fatal flame, and greatly sacrifice
Thy private suff'rings to the public welfare.
O say, Alcanor, wert thou to behold
(As soon thou may'st) this fam'd metropolis
With foes begirt, behold its pining tenants
Prey on each other for the means of life,
Whilst lakes of blood, and mountains of the slain,

(As

(As erst in Jury) putrify the air,
And sweep off thousands with their pois'nous steams,
Would thy slain children be aveng'd by this?

Alc. No, Pharon, no; I live not for myself.
My wife and children lost, my country's now
My family.

Pha. Then let not that be lost.

Alc. 'Tis lost by cowardice.

Pha. By rashness, often.

Alc. Pharon desist.

Pha. My noble Lord, I cannot,
Must not desist, will not, since you're possess'd
Of means to bring this insolent invader
To any terms you'll claim.

Alc. What means!

Pha. Palmira,
That blooming fair, the flow'r of all his camp,
By thee borne off in our last skirmish with him,
Seems the divine ambassadress of peace,
Sent to procure our safety. Mahomet
Has, by his heralds, thrice propos'd her ransom,
And bid us fix the price.

Alc. I know it, Pharon.

And, would'st thou then restore this noble treasure
To that Barbarian? would'st thou, for the frauds,
The deaths, the devastations he brings on us,
Enrich his ruffian hands with such a gem,
And render beauty the reward of rapine?——
Smile not, my friend, nor think that at these years,
Well travell'd in the winter of my days,
I entertain a thought tow'rd's this young beauty,
But what's as pure as is the western gale,
That breathes upon the uncropt violet——

Pha. My Lord——

Alc.—— This heart, by age and grief congeal'd,
Is no more sensible to love's endearments,
Than are our barren rocks to morn's sweet dew,
That balmy trickles down their rugged cheeks.

Pha. My noble chief, each master-piece of nature
Commands involuntary homage from us.

Alc. I own a tenderness, unfelt before,
A sympathetic grief, with ardent wishes

To make her happy, fill'd my widow'd bosom.
 I dread her being in that monster's power,
 And burn to have her hate him, like myself.
 'Twas on this hour I, at her modest suit,
 Promis'd her audience in my own pavilion.
 Pharon, go thou mean while, and see the senate
 Assembled strait —— I'll sound 'em as I ought.
[Exeunt severally.]

SCENE *changes to a Room of State.*

Enter PALMIRA.

Pal. What means this boding terror that usurps,
 In spite of me, dominion o'er my heart,
 Converting the sweet flow'r of new-blown hope
 To deadly night-shade; pois'ning to my soul
 The fountain of its bliss——O holy prophet!
 Shall I ne'er more attend thy sacred lessons?
 O Zaphna! much lov'd youth! I feel for thee
 As for myself.——But hold, my final audit
 Is now at hand——I tremble for th' event!
 Here comes my judge——Now liberty, or bondage!

Enter ALCANOR.

Alc. Palmira, whence those tears? trust me, fair
 maid,
 Thou art not fall'n into barbarians hands;
 What Mecca can afford of pomp or pleasure,
 To call attention from misfortune's lap,
 Demand and share it.

Pal. No, my generous victor,
 My suit's for nothing Mecca can afford;
 Pris'ner these two long months beneath your roof,
 I've tasted such benignity and candor,
 Whilst your own hands so labour'd to beguile
 The anxious moments of captivity,
 That oft I've call'd my tears ingratitude.

Alc. If ought remains, that's in my power, to smooth
 The rigour of your fate, to crown your wishes,
 And make you say, *I'm happy*; why 'twould fill
 The furrows in my cheeks, and make old age
 Put on its summer garb.

Pal.

Pal. Thus low I bless thee.

[*kneeling.*]

It is on you, on you alone, Alcanor,
My whole of future happiness depends;
Restore me then, restore me to my country,
Restore me to my father, prince, and prophet;
Restore me to my——Oh!——

Alc. To what, Palmira!

[*raising her.*]

Those meaning blushes, that articulate pause,
Render my question vain. This subtle robber
Has trespass'd on thy heart.——Art thou not promis'd
To be enroll'd his wife, to swell the number
Of his licentious *Haram*?

Pal. No, my Lord.

Train'd up from infancy at Mah'met's feet,
Watch'd by his eye, and by his precepts form'd,
I rev'rence him; nay, view him as inspir'd
By that tremendous pow'r whose sword he bears;
But never did this humble breast conceive
A hope so big with vanity as that.

Alc. With vanity! now by my sword, Palmira,
'Twere vanity in him to aim so high.
That gen'rous soul, superior to misfortune,
That breast, where every virtue finds a mansion,
And that fair form, where beauty sits enthron'd
Amidst the smiles and graces, speak you sprung
From such a race, as would disdain to match
With this fierce Arab.

Pal. No, the pride of birth

I am a stranger to; a captive infant,
Nurs'd in the camp, I ne'er could yet discover
Who was my father. But our holy prophet
Has well supply'd that loss. Have pity then:
Pity, Alcanor, one who's torn from all
That's dear or venerable to her soul;
And O, restore her to her faith and country.

Alc. Is slav'ry dear then? is fraud venerable?
What country? a tumultuous wand'ring camp!

Pal. My country, Sir, is not a single spot
Of such a mould, or fix'd to such a clime;
No, 'tis the social circle of my friends,
The lov'd community in which I'm link'd,
And in whose welfare all my wishes center.

Alc.

Alc. Excellent maid! then Mecca be thy country.
 Robb'd of my children, would Palmira deign
 To let me call her child, the toil I took
 To make her destiny propitious to her,
 Would lighten the rough burden of my own.
 But no; you scorn my country and my laws.

Pal. Can I be yours when not my own? your bounties
 Demand and share my gratitude——But Mahomet
 Claims right o'er me of parent, prince, and prophet.

Alc. Of parent, prince, and prophet! heav'n's!
 that robber

Who, 'scap'd felon, emulates a throne,
 And, scoffer at all faiths, proclaims a new one!

Pal. O cease, my Lord; this blasphemous abuse
 On one, whom millions with myself adore,
 Does violence to my ear; such black profaneness
 'Gainst heav'n's interpreter, blots out remembrance
 Of favours past, and nought succeeds but horror.

Alc. O superstition! thy pernicious rigours,
 Inflexible to reason, truth, and nature,
 Banish humanity the gentlest breasts.
 Palmira, I lament to see thee plung'd
 So deep in error.——

Pal. Do you then reject
 My just petition? can Alcanor's goodness
 Be deaf to suffering virtue? can his justice
 Be blind to injur'd right? name but the ransom,
 And Mahomet will triple what you ask.

Alc. There is no ransom Mahomet can offer
 Proportion'd to the prize. Trust me, Palmira,
 I cannot yield thee up: what! to a tyrant,
 Who wrongs thy youth, and mocks thy tender heart
 With vile illusions, and fanatic terrors!——

Enter PHARON.

What would'st thou, Pharon?

Pha. From yon western gate,
 Which opens on Moradia's fertile plains,
 Mahomet's gen'ral, Mirvan, hastes to greet thee.

Alc. Mirvan, that vile apostate!

Pha. In one hand
 He holds a scimitar, the other bears

An

An olive branch, which to our chiefs he waves,
An emblem of his suit—a martial youth,
Zaphna by name, attends him for our hostage.

Pal. apart.] Zaphna! mysterious heav'n!

Pha. Mirvan advances

This way, my Lord, to render you his charge.

Alc. Mirvan advance! how dare the traitor see me?

Palmira, thou retire.—Pharon, be present.

[*Exit Palmira.*]

Enter MIRVAN.

After six years of infamous rebellion
Against thy native country, dost thou, Mirvan,
Again profane, with thy detested presence,
These sacred walls, which once thy hands defended,
But thy bad heart has vilely since betray'd!
Thou poor deserter of thy country's gods,
Thou base invader of thy country's rights,
What would'st thou have with me?

Mir. I'd pardon thee—

Out of compassion to thy age and suff'rings,
And high regard for thy experienc'd valour,
Heav'n's great apostle offers thee in friendship
A hand could crush thee; and I come commission'd
To name the terms of peace he deigns to tender.

Alc. He deigns to tender! insolent impostor!
Must Mahomet then, ye pow'rs! give peace to Mecca,
Or plunder it?—dost thou not, Mirvan, blush
To serve this wretch——this base of soul, as birth?

Mir. Mahomet's grandeur's in himself; he shines not
With borrow'd lustre, raises not his stature
By perching on his father's monument:
Born of himself, himself's the only fountain
Of all the flowing honours that adorn him.
Such is the master I have chosen; such
Is heav'n's elect to rule the world in truth.

Alc. Mirvan, I know thee: this insidious blazon
Dazzles not me. Banish, for once, imposture,
And view with reason's eye this homag'd prophet,
Then villain, or enthusiast, thou must grant him.—
A pilf'ring camel-driver, one so vile
His own vile crew renounc'd him——out-cast thus

Of

Of outcasts, straight, he arrogates the prophet,
 Stiles himself heav'n's apostle, and, by means
 Of a forg'd dream, draws o'er to his imposture
 The refuse of all nations.—— Banish'd Mecca,
 From cave to cave with Fatima he fled,
 Whilst scatter'd, persecuted and proscrib'd,
 Through wastes and deserts his disciples stray'd.

Pha. Stray'd, till Medina, poison'd with their errors,
 Gave them a home, and prop'd the impious sect.

Alc. 'Twas then that thou, that thou thyself, more
 brave,

More just and gen'rous, didst attack this tyrant,
 Whose voluntary slave thou'rt now become.

If a true prophet, durst thou wound him then?

If an impostor, dar'st thou now obey him?

Mir. Plung'd in the night of prejudice, and bound
 In fetters of hereditary faith,

My judgment slept; but when I found him born
 To mould anew the prostrate universe,

I started from my dream, join'd his career,
 And shar'd his arduous, and immortal labours.

Once, I must own, I was as blind as thou;

Then wake to glory, and be chang'd like me.

Pha. O what a fall from virtue was that change!

Alc. What death to honour, wak'ning to such glory!

Mir. Embrace our faith then, reign with Mahomet,
 And, cloth'd in terrors, make the vulgar tremble.

Alc. 'Tis Mahomet, and tyrants like to Mahomet,
 'Tis Mirvan, and apostates like to Mirvan,

I only would make tremble.—— Is it, say'st thou,
 Religion that's the parent of this rapine,

This violence and rage?—— No, true religion

Is always mild, propitious, and humane;

Plays not the tyrant, plants no faith in blood,

Nor bears destruction on her chariot wheels,

But stoops to polish, succour, and redress,

And builds her grandeur on the public good.

Mir. Thou art turn'd Christian, sure! some strag-
 gling monk

Has taught thee these tame lessons——

Alc. If the Christians

Hold principles like these, which reason dictates,

Which all our notions of the pow'rs divine
 Declare the social laws they meant for man,
 And all the beauties and delights of nature
 Bear witness to, the Christians may be right :
 Thy sect cannot, who, nurs'd in blood and slaughter,
 Worship a cruel and revengeful being,
 And draw him always with his thunder round him,
 As ripe for the destruction of mankind.

Mir. If clemency delights thee, learn it here.
 Though banish'd by thy voice his native city,
 Though by thy hand robb'd of his only son,
 Mahomet pardons thee ; nay farther, begs
 The hatred burning 'twixt you be extinguish'd
 With reconciliation's gen'rous tear.

Alc. I know thy master's arts ; his gen'rous tears,
 Like the refreshing drops that previous fall
 To the wild outrage of o'erwhelming earthquakes,
 Only forerun destruction ; his best friendship
 Is but a guileful clue, whereby to seize
 Your heart's each fort, and turn its garrison
 Against itself. Courage he has, not brav'ry,
 For blood and havock are the sure attendants
 On his victorious car.

Pha. Leagues he will make too——

Alc. Like other grasping tyrants, till he eyes
 A lucky juncture to enlarge his bounds ;
 Then he'll deride 'em, leap o'er ev'ry tie
 Of sacred guarantee, or sworn protection,
 And, when th' oppressed ally implores assistance,
 Beneath that mask, invade the wish'd-for realms,
 And from pure friendship take them to himself.

Mir. Mahomet fights heav'n's battles, bends the bow
 To spread heav'n's laws, and to subject to faith
 The iron neck of error.

Alc. Mirvan, yes,
 His new religion, moulded to his aims,
 Holds out a heav'nly kingdom to his followers,
 Whilst humble, he courts but an earthly one.
 Lust, and ambition, Mirvan, are the springs
 Of all his actions, whilst, without one virtue,
 Diffimulation, like a flatt'ring painter,
 Bedecks him with the colouring of them all.

This is thy master's portrait——But no more——
My soul's inexorable, and my hate
Immortal as the cause from whence it sprang.

Mir. What cause——

Alc. The difference between good and evil.

Mir. Thou talk'st to me, Alcanor, with an air
Of a stern judge, that from his dread tribunal
Intimidates the criminal beneath him.
Resume thy temper, act the minister,
And treat with me as with th' ambassador
Of heav'n's apostle, and Arabia's king.

Alc. Arabia's king! what king? who crown'd
him?——

Mir. Conquest.——

Whilst to the stile of conqu'ror and of monarch,
Patron of peace he'd add——Name then the price
Of peace and of Palmira——Boundless treasures,
The spoils of vanquish'd monarchs, and the stores
Of rich'd provinces are thrown before thee.
Our troops, with unwont ardour, hasten hither
To lay in ruin this rebellious city;
Stem then the rushing torrent: Mahomet
In person comes to claim a conference with thee
For this good purpose.

Alc. Who! Mahomet?

Mir. Yes, he conjures thou't grant it.

Alc. Traitor, were I sole ruler here in Mecca,
I'd answer thee with chastisement——

Mir. Hot man!

I pity thy false virtue——But farewell——
And since the senate share thy power in Mecca,
To their serener wisdoms I'll appeal. [Exit Mirvan.

Alc. I'll meet thee there, and see whose voice is victor.
Come, Pharon, aid me to repulse this traitor;
To bear him, with impunity, amongst us,
Is treason 'gainst ourselves——Ye sacred powers,
My country's gods, that for three thousand years
Have reign'd protectors of the tribe of Ishmael;
And thou, O sun, resplendent torch of day,
The image of those gods, who in thy march
Beam'st their light on us, O support my spirit
In that firm purpose it has always held,

To combat violence, fraud, and usurpation,
To pluck the spoil from the oppressor's jaws,
And keep my country, as I found it, free. [Exeunt.

ACT II.

SCENE, PALMIRA'S Apartment.

PALMIRA *Discovered.*

PALMIRA.

CEASE, cease ye streaming instruments of woe
From your ignoble toil—Take warmth, my heart;
Collect thy scatter'd powers, and brave misfortune.
In vain the storm-tost mariner repines;
Were he within to raise as great a tempest
As beats him from without, it would not smoothe
One boist'rous surge: impatience only throws
Discredit on mischance, and adds a shame
To our affliction.

Enter ZAPHNA.

Hah! all gracious heav'n!
Thou, Zaphna! is it thou? what pitying angel
Guided thy steps to these abodes of bondage?

Zaph. Thou sov'reign of my soul, and all its powers;
Object of ev'ry fear and ev'ry wish;
Friend, sister, love, companion, all that's dear!
Do I once more behold thee, my Palmira?
O, I will set it down the whitest hour
That Zaphna e'er was blest with——

Pal. Say, my hero——
Are my ills ended then? they are, they are:
Now Zaphna's here, I am no more a captive,
Except to him: O blest captivity!

Zaph. Those smiles are dearer to my raptur'd breast,
Sweeter those accents to my list'ning heart,
Than all Arabia's spices to the sense.

Pal. No wonder that my soul was so elate,
No wonder that the cloud of grief gave way,
When thou, my sun of comfort, wert so nigh.

Zaph. Since that dire hour, when on Sarabia's strand,

The barb'rous foe depriv'd me of Palmira,
 In what a gulph of horror and despair
 Have thy imagin'd perils plung'd my soul !
 Stretch'd on expiring courses, for a while
 To the deaf stream I pour'd out my complaint,
 And beg'd I might be number'd with the dead,
 That strow'd its banks—Then starting from despair,
 With rage I flew to Mahomet for vengeance :
 He, for some high mysterious purpose, known
 To heav'n and him alone, at length dispatch'd
 The valiant Mirvan to demand a truce.
 Instant on wings of lightning I pursu'd him,
 No order had—no leave obtain'd—pursu'd him,
 And enter'd as his hostage—fix'd, Palmira,
 Or to redeem, or die a captive with thee.

Pal. Heroic youth !

Zaph. But how have these Barbarians
 Treated my fair ?

Pal. With high humanity :

I, in my victor, found a friend.—Alcanor
 Has made me feel captivity in nothing,
 But absence from my Zaphna, and my friends.—

Zaph. I grieve a soul so generous is our foe.
 But now presented as an hostage to him,
 His noble bearing and humanity
 Made captive of my heart ; I felt, methought,
 A new affection lighted in my breast,
 And wonder'd whence the infant ardour sprang.

Pal. Yet, gen'rous as he is, not all my prayers,
 Not all the tears I lavish at his feet,
 Can move him to restore me—

Zaph. But he shall—

Let the Barbarian know he shall, Palmira.
 The God of Mahomet, our divine protector,
 Whose still triumphant standard I have borne
 O'er piles of vanquish'd infidels—That power,
 Which brought unnumber'd battlements to earth,
 Will humble Mecca too.

Enter

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, noble Mirvan,
Do my Palmira's chains sit loose upon her?
Say, is it freedom? this presumptuous senate——
Mir. Has granted all we ask'd, all we could wish.—
The truce obtain'd, the gates to Mahomet
Flew open——

Zaph. Mahomet in Mecca! say'st thou?
Once more in Mecca!

Pal. Transport, bid him welcome!

Zaph. Thy suff'rings then are o'er, the ebb is past,
And a full tide of hope flows in upon us.

Mir. The spirit of our prophet, that inspir'd me,
Breath'd such divine persuasion from my lips,
As shook the reverend fathers.——Sirs, cried I,
This fav'rite of high heav'n, who rules in battle,
Before whose footstool tributary kings
Bow the anointed head, born here in Mecca,
Asks but to be inroll'd a senator,
And you refuse his pray'r. Deluded sages!
Although your conqueror, he requests no more
Than one day's truce, pure pity to yourselves!
To save you, if he can, and you—O shame!——
At this a gen'ral murmur spread around,
Which seem'd propitious to us——

Zaph. Greatly carried!
Go on——

Mir. Then straight th' inflexible Alcanor
Flew through the streets, assembling all the people,
To bar our prophet. Thither too I fled,
Urg'd the same arguments, exhorted, threatned,
Till they unhing'd the gates, and gave free passage
To Mahomet and his chiefs——in vain Alcanor
And his dishearten'd party, strove t' oppose him;
Serene and dauntless through the gazing croud,
With more than human majesty he mov'd,
Bearing the peaceful olive, whilst the truce
Was instantly proclaim'd——

Pal. But where's the prophet?

Mir. Redoub'd in yonder grot that joins the temple,
Attended by his chiefs.

Zaph. There let us haste
With duteous step; and bow ourselves before him.

[*Exeunt.*]

SCENE *Changes to a spacious Grotto. Mahomet with the Alcoran before him; Hercides, Ammon, Ali, &c. attending at a Distance.*

Mah. Glorious hypocrisy! what fools are they,
Who, fraught with lustful or ambitious views,
Wear not thy specious mask. — Thou, Alcoran!
Hast won more battles, ta'en more cities for me,
Than thrice my feeble numbers had atchiev'd,
Without the succour of thy sacred impulse.

[*Coming forward.*]

Invincible supporters of our grandeur!
My faithful chiefs, Hercides, Ammon, Ali!
Go and instruct this people in my name;
That faith may dawn, and, like a morning-star,
Be herald to my rising.
Lead them to know, and to adore my god;
But above all, to fear him — Lo Palmira!

[*Exeunt Hercides, &c.*]

Her angel face, with unfeign'd blushes spread,
Proclaims the purity that dwells within.

Enter MIRVAN, ZAPHNA, and PALMIRA.

[*To Pal.*] The hand of war was ne'er before so barbarous,

Never bore from me half so rich a spoil
As thee, my fair.

Pal. Joy to my heav'nly guardian!
Joy to the world that Mahomet's in Mecca!

Mah. My child, let me embrace thee — How's this, Zaphna!

Thou here! —

Zaph. kneeling. My father, chief, and holy pontiff!
The god that thou'rt inspir'd by, march'd before me:
Ready, for thee, to wade through seas of danger,
Or cope with death itself, I hither hasten'd
To yield myself an hostage, and with zeal
Prevent thy order.

Mah.

Mah. 'Twas not well, rash boy :
 He that does more than I command him, errs
 As much as he who falters in his duty,
 And is not for my purpose—I obey
 My god——implicitly obey thou me.

Pal. Pardon, my gracious Lord, his well-meant ardour,
 Brought up from tender infancy beneath
 The shelter of thy sacred patronage,
 Zaphna and I've been animated still
 By the same sentiments: alas, great prophet,
 I've had enough of wretchedness—to languish
 A prisoner here, far both from him and you:
 Grudge me not then the ray of consolation
 His presence beam'd, nor cloud my dawning hope
 Of rising freedom and felicity.

Mah. Palmira, 'tis enough, I read thy heart——
 Be not alarm'd; tho' burden'd with the cares
 Of thrones and altars, still my guardian eye
 Will watch o'er thee, as o'er the universe.
 Follow my generals, Zaphna: fair Palmira,
 Retire, and pay your powerful vows to heav'n,
 And dread no wrongs but from Alcanor.

[Zaphna and Palmira go out separately.]

Mirvan——

Attend thou here——'Tis time, my trusty soldier,
 My long try'd friend, to lay unfolded to thee
 The close resolves and counsels of my heart.
 The tedious length of a precarious siege
 May damp the present ardour of my troops,
 And check me in the height of my career.
 Let us not give deluded mortals leisure,
 By reason, to disperse the mystic gloom
 We've cast about us.—Prepossession, friend, .
 Reigns monarch of the million——Mecca's crowd
 Gaze at my rapid victories, and think
 Some awful power directs my arm to conquest.
 But whilst our friends once more renew their efforts,
 To win the wav'ring people to our interest,
 What think'st thou, say, of Zaphna and Palmira?

Mir. As of thy most resign'd and faithful vassals.

Mah. O! Mirvan, they're the deadliest of my foes.

Mir.

Mir. How!

Mah. Yes, they love each other——

Mir. Well——What crime——

Mah. What crime, dost say?——Learn all my frailty, then——

My life's a combat, keen austerity
Subjects my nature to abstemious bearings.
I've banish'd from my lips that trait'rous liquor,
That either works to practices of outrage,
Or melts the manly breast to woman weakness;
Or on the burning sands, or desert rocks,
With thee I bear th'inclemency of climates,
Freeze at the pole, or scorch beneath the line.
For all these toils love only can retaliate,
The only consolation or reward!
Fruit of my labours, idol of my incense,
And sole divinity that I adore.
Know then, that I prefer this young Palmira
To all the ripen'd beauties that attend me;
Dwell on her accents, doat upon her smiles,
And am not mine but her's: now judge, my friend,
How vast the jealous transports of thy master,
When at his feet he daily hears this charmer
Avow a foreign love, and, insolent!
Give Mahomet a rival?

Mir. How! and Mahomet

Not instantly revenge!——

Mah. Ay, should he not?

But better to detest him, know him better:
Learn then, that both my rival, and my love,
Sprang from the loins of this audacious tyrant.

Mir. Alcanor!——

Mah. Is their father; old Hercides,
To whose sage instruction I commit
My captive infants, late reveal'd it to me——
Perdition! I myself light up their flame,
And fed it till I set myself on fire.
Well, means must be employ'd; but see, the father:
He comes this way, and launches from his eye
Malignant sparks of enmity and rage.
Mirvan, see all ta'en care of; let Hercides,
With his escorte, beset yon gate; bid Ali

Make

Make proper disposition round the temple ;
This done, return, and render me account
Of what success we meet with 'mongst the people :
Then, Mirvan, we'll determine, or to loose,
Or bridle in our vengeance, as it suits.

[Exit Mirvan.

Enter ALCANOR.

Mah. Why dost thou start, Alcanor? whence that
horror?

Is then my sight so baneful to thee?

Alc. Heav'ns!

Must I then bear this? must I meet in Mecca,
On terms of peace, this spoiler of the earth?

Mah. Approach, old man, without a blush, since
heav'n

For some high end, decrees our future union.

Alc. I blush not for myself, but thee, thou tyrant;
For thee, bad man! who com'st with serpent-guile
To sow dissention in the realms of peace;
Thy very name sets families at variance,
'Twixt son and father, bursts the bonds of nature,
And scares endearment from the nuptial pillow;
Ev'n truce, with thee, is a new stratagem
For leave to plunge the dagger in our hearts.
And is it, insolent dissembler! thus
Thou com'st to give the sons of Mecca peace,
And me an unknown god?—

Mah. Were I to answer any but Alcanor,
That unknown god should speak in thunder for me:
But here with thee I'd parley as a man.

Alc. What can'st thou say? what urge in thy de-
fence?

That like a hunger-stung and rav'nous wolf,
Prowling for prey, thou traversedst the world,
Seizing on all that comes within thy grasp.

Mah. Each nation of the peopled globe by turns
Have soar'd to triumph, and immortal fame;
At length Arabia's happy hour is come.
Her gen'rous sons too long, alas! unknown,
Have suffer'd all their glory to lie buried:
New days, by vict'ry mark'd, at length proceed,

And

And Mecca's now the destin'd seat of power.

Alc. Power is a curse when in a tyrant's hands,
But in a bigot tyrant's — triple curse.

Mah. Behold from north to south the ravag'd globe
Lies desolate, a waste of crumbled empires.
Persia still bleeding, and her throne revers'd,
India yok'd to slav'ry, Egypt spoil'd,
And Constantine's late grandeur now no more.
Behold the well-built Roman empire mould'ring
On ev'ry side; whilst, ruining beneath
Its own enormous weight, its scatter'd members,
Like branches from the parent-tree lopt off,
Lie dead and wither'd — On this wreck of nations
Let lov'd Arabia rise: a new religion,
New laws, new ties, and a new god are wanting,
To rouse the slumb'ring world to deeds of glory.

Alc. To deeds of rapine, bloodshed, and imposture!

Mah. Minos in Crete; in Asia Zoroaster;
At Egypt fam'd Osiris; and in Latium
The pious Numa, gave those barb'rous people
Their ineffective laws; I'm therefore come,
After a thousand annual suns, to banish
Their crude impostures, and unite all nations
Under one faith and sovereign —

Alc. At thy nod, then,
The face of the creation must be chang'd.
By menaces and carnage, modest thou!
Would'st force all mortals to believe alike:
What right hast thou receiv'd to plant new faiths,
Or lay a claim to royalty and priesthood?

Mah. The right that a resolv'd and tow'ring spirit
Has o'er the grov'ling instinct of the vulgar —

Alc. Patience good heav'ns! Have I not known
thee, Mahomet,
When void of wealth, inheritance, or fame,
Rank'd with the lowest of the low at Mecca?

Mah. Dost thou not know, superb, yet feeble man!
That the low insect lurking in the grass,
And the imperial eagle which aloft
Ploughs the ethereal plain, are both alike
In the eternal eye — mortals are equal.
It is not birth, magnificence, or pow'r,

But

But virtue only makes the difference 'twixt them.

Alc. apart.] What sacred truth, from what polluted lips!

Mah. By virtue's ardent pinions bore on high,
Heav'n met my zeal, gave me in solemn charge
Its sacred laws, then bade me on and publish.

Alc. And did heav'n bid thee on and plunder too?

Mah. My law is active, and inflames the soul
With thirst of glory: what can thy dumb gods?
What laurels spring beneath their sooty altars?
Thy slothful sect disgrace the human-kind,
Enervate lifeless images of men!
Mine bear th' intrepid soul; my faith makes heroes.

Alc. Go preach these doctrines at Medina, where,
By prostrate wretches thou art rais'd to homage.

Mah. Hear me, thy Mecca trembles at my name:
If therefore thou would'st save thyself or city,
Embrace my proffer'd friendship—What, to-day,
I thus solicit, I'll command to-morrow.

Alc. Contract with thee a friendship! frontless man!
Know'st thou a god can work that miracle?

Mah. I do——Necessity. Thy interest.

Alc. Interest is thy god, equity is mine.
Propose the tie of this unnatural union;
Say, is't the loss of thy ill-fated son,
Who in the field fell victim to my rage,
Or the dear blood of my poor captive children,
Shed by thy butchering hands?

Mah. Ay, 'tis thy children.
Mark me then well, and learn th' important secret
Which I'm sole master of——Thy children live.

Alc. Live!

Mah. Yes——both live——

Alc. What say'st thou? both?

Mah. Ay, both.

Alc. And dost thou not beguile me?

Mah. No, old man.

Alc. Propitious heav'ns! say, Mahomet, for now,
Methinks! I could hold endless converse with thee,
Say, what's their portion! liberty, or bondage?—

Mah. Bred in my camp, and tutor'd in my law,
They wait upon my will.

Alc.

Alc. And hast thou ne'er
 Let loose thy vengeance on them? never wrung 'em
 With shackles, rack, or scourge? ne'er thought of me,
 And then——

Mah. No, I disdain'd to punish them
 For injuries done by thee——hear then, Alcanor;
 I hold the balance of their destinies,
 And now its on the turn—their lives, or deaths—
 'Tis thine, to say which shall preponderate.

Alc. Mine! can I save them? name the mighty
 ransom——

If I must bear their chains, double the weight,
 And I will kiss the hand that puts them on:
 Or if my streaming blood must be the purchase,
 Drain ev'ry sluice and channel of my body,
 My swelling veins will burst to give it passage.

Mah. I'll tell thee then—renounce thy pagan faith;
 Abolish thy vain gods, and——

Alc. Hah!

Mah. Nay more,
 Surrender Mecca to me, quit this temple,
 Assist me to impose upon the world,
 Thunder my Koran to the gazing crowd,
 Proclaim me for their prophet, and their king,
 And be a glorious pattern of credulity
 To Korah's stubborn tribe. These terms perform'd,
 Thy son shall be restor'd, and Mah'met's self
 Will deign to wed thy daughter.

Alc. Hear me, Mahomet,
 I am a father, and this bosom boasts
 A heart as tender as e'er parent bore.
 After a fifteen years of anguish for them,
 Once more to view my children, clasp 'em to me,
 And die in their embraces! melting thought!
 But were I doom'd, or to enslave my country,
 And help to spread black error o'er the earth;
 Or to behold those blood-embued hands,
 Deprive me of 'em both——Know me then, Mahomet,
 I'd not admit a doubt to cloud my choice——

[Looking earnestly at Mahomet for some time
 before he speaks.]

Farewell.

[Exit Alcanor.
Mah.

Mah. Why, fare thee well then——churlish dotard:
Inexorable fool! now, by my arms,
I will have great revenge; I'll meet thy scorn
With triple retribution.

Enter MIRVAN.

Well, my Mirvan,
What say'st thou to it now?

Mir. Why, that Alcanor,
Or we, must fall.

Mah. Fall then the obdurate rebel!

Mir. The truce expires to-morrow, when Alcanor
Again is Mecca's master, and has vow'd
Destruction on thy head; the senate too
Have pass'd thy doom.

Mah. Those heart-chill'd, paltry bablers,
Plac'd on the bench of sloth, with ease can nod,
And vote a man to death; why don't the cowards
Stand me in yonder plain?——With half their num-
bers

I drove 'em headlong to their walls for shelter;
And he was deem'd the wisest senator,
That enter'd first the gate; but now they think
They've got me in the toil, their spirits mount,
And they could prove most valorous assassins.——
Well, this I like——I always ow'd my greatness
To opposition; had I not met struggle
I'd been obscure——enough——perish Alcanor!
He marbl'd up, the pliant populace,
Those dupes of novelty, will bend before us
Like oars to a hurricane——

Mir. No time
Is to be lost;

Mah. But for a proper arm?
For, howsoever irksome, we must save
Appearances, and mask it with the vulgar.

Mir. True, my sage chief.——What think'st thou
then of Zaphna?

Mah. Of Zaphna say'st thou!

Mir. Yes, Alcanor's hostage——
He can in private do thee vengeance on him,
Thy other fav'rites of maturer age,

And more discreetly zealous, would not risk it:
 Youth is the stock, whence grafted superstition
 Shoots with unbounded vigour. He's a slave
 To thy despotic faith, and urg'd by thee,
 However mild his nature may appear,
 Howe'er humane and noble is his spirit,
 Or strong his reason, where allow'd to reason,
 He would for heav'n's sake, martyr half mankind.

Mah. The brother of Palmira?

Mir. Yes, that brother,
 The only son of thy outrageous foe,
 And the incestuous rival of thy love.

Mah. I hate the stripling, let his very name:
 The manes of my son too cries for vengeance
 On the curst fire; but then, thou know'st my love,
 Know'st from whose blood she sprang; this staggers,

Mirvan.

And yet I'm here surrounded with a gulph
 Ready to swallow me; come too, in quest
 Of altars and a throne——What must be done?——
 My warring passions, like contending clouds,
 When fraught with thunder's fatal fuel, burst
 Upon themselves, and rend me with the shock.
 And shall enervating, contagious love,
 Hag my aspiring spirit, sink me down
 To woman's shackles, make a lap-dog of me?
 Glory: that must not be! ambition still,
 And great revenge, impetuous urge their claims,
 And must be notic'd. *Mirvan*, sound this youth:
 Touch not at once upon the startling purpose,
 But make due preparation.

Mir. I'll attack him
 With all the forces of enthusiasm:
 There lies our strength.

Mah. First then, a solemn vow
 To act whatever heav'n by me enjoins him.
 Next, omens, dreams, and visions may be pleaded
 Hints too of black designs by this Alcanor
 Upon Palmira's virtue, and his life——
 But to the proof——Be now propitious, fortune,
 Then love, ambition, vengeance, jointly triumph

ACT

A C T III.

ZAPHNA and PALMIRA.

ZAPHNA.

ALCANOR claim a private conference with us !
What has he to unfold ?

Pal. I tremble, Zaphna.

Zaph. Time press'd too, did he say ?

Pal. He did ; then cast

A look so piercing on me, it o'erwhelm'd
My face with deep confusion ; this he mark'd,
Then, starting, left me.

Zaph. aside.] Hah ! this gives me fear
That Mirvan's jealousies are too well ground'd ;
But I must not distract her tender bosom
With visionary terrors. [*To Pal.*] Both in private !

Pal. In private both.

Zaph. Her virtue, and my life ! [*apart.*]
It cannot be ; so reverend a form
Could ne'er be pander to such black devices.

Pal. But let us shun it, Zaphna ; much I fear
Alcanor has deceiv'd us ; dread the treach'ry
Of this blood-thirsty senate. Trust me, Zaphna,
They've sworn the extirpation of our faith,
Nor care by what vile means—

Zaph. My soul's best treasure,
For whose security my ev'ry thought
Is up in arms, regardless of my own ;
Shun thou Alcanor's presence. I would meet him
Intrepid instantly, but duty calls
To more important deeds. This hour, Palmira,
Mirvan, by order of our royal pontiff,
Prepares to solemnize some act of worship
Of a more hallow'd and mysterious kind,
Than will admit of vulgar eye. Myself
Alone am honour'd to assist.

Pal. Alone !

Zaph. Yes, to devote myself by solemn vow
For some great act, of which my fair's the prize.

Pal. What aét?

Zaph. No matter, since my lov'd Palmira
Shall be the glorious recompence.—

Pal. Oh Zaphna!

Methinks I do not like this secret vow!
Why must not I be present? were I with thee
I should not be so anxious; I'd then guard thee
'Gainst aught that offer'd in the shape of danger.
For, trust me, Zaphna, my affection for thee
Is of that pure, disinterested nature,
So free from passion's taint, I've no one wish
To have thee more than thus; have thee my friend,
Share thy lov'd converse; wait upon thy welfare,
And view thee with a sister's spotless eye.

Zaph. Angelic excellence!

Pal. And, let me tell thee,

This Mirvan, this fierce Mirvan gives me terrors:
So far from tendering consolation to me,
His theme is blood and slaughter; as I met him,
His eyes flam'd fury, whilst in dubious phrase
He thus bespoke me:—"The destroying angel
"Must be let loose.—Palmira, heav'n ordains
"Some glorious deed for thee, yet hid in darkness;
"Learn an implicit rev'rence for its will,
"And above all, I warn thee, fear for Zaphna.

Zaph. What could he mean? Can I believe, Alcanor,
Thy fair deportment but a treach'rous mask?
Perhaps in those bless'd moments, when once more
I felt the sun-shine of Palmira's smiles,
My soul, wrapt up in its own transport, full,
Too full to let in any stranger thought,
Forgetting all its griefs, and all its fears,
O'erlook'd the artful windings of his heart;
For, since, I've held me happy in his friendship,
And bondage wore the livery of choice.
But this was wrong, and henceforth I will hate him
With double zeal for thus seducing me.
Yet, spite of all the rage that ought to fire me
Against this rebel to our faith and prophet,
'Tis hard to hate, where one's inclin'd to love.

Pal. How has heav'n fraught our love-link'd hearts,
my Zaphna,

With

With the same thoughts, aversions, and desires!
But for thy safety, and our dread religion,
That thunders hatred to all infidels,
With great remorse I should accuse Alcanor.

Zaphn. Let us shake off this vain remorse, Palmira,
Resign ourselves to heav'n, and act its pleasure.
The hour is come that I must pledge my vow.
Doubt not but the supreme, who claims this service,
Will prove propitious to our chaste endearments.
Farewell, my love;—I fly to gain the summit
Of earth's felicity ——— to gain Palmira. [Exit.]

Pal. Where'er I turn me here, 'tis all suspicion!
What means this vow? Mirvan, I like thee not.
Alcanor too distracts my tim'rous breast!
Ev'n Mahomet's self I dread whilst I invoke him!
Like one benighted, 'midst a place of tombs,
I gaze around me, start at ev'ry motion,
And seem hemm'd in by visionary spectres.
All righteous power, whom trembling I adore,
And blindly follow! O deliver me
From these heart-rending terrors.—Ha! who's here?

Enter MAHOMET.

'Tis he! 'tis Mahomet himself; kind heav'n
Has sent him to my aid—My gracious Lord,
Protect the dear, dear idol of my soul;
Save Zaphna, guard him from——

Mah. From what?——Why, Zaphna?
Whence this vain terror? is he not with us?

Pal. O Sir, you double now my apprehensions,
Those broken accents, and that eager look,
Shew you have anguish smothering at the heart,
And prove, for once, that Mahomet's a mortal.

Mah. apart.] Hah! I shall turn a traitor to myself—
O woman! woman!——Hear me; ought I not
To be enrag'd at thy profane attachment?
How could thy breast, without the keenest stinging,
Harbour one thought not dictated by me?
Is that young mind, I took such toil to form,
Turn'd an ingrate and infidel at once?
Away, rebellious maid——

Pal. What dost thou say,

My royal Lord? thus prostrate at your feet,
 Let me implore forgiveness; if in ought
 I have offended; talk not to me thus;
 A frown from thee, my father and my king,
 Is death to poor Palmira. Say then, Mahomet,
 Didst thou not deign to justify his choice?
 Didst thou not in this very place permit him
 To tender me his vows?

Mah. apart. His vows! perdition!
 How the soft trait'ress racks me!—Rise, Palmira.
 [*Apart.*] Down rebel love! I must be calm.

come hither;
 Beware, rash maid, of such imprudent steps,
 They lead to guilt. What wild, pernicious errors
 Mayn't the heart yield to, if not greatly watch'd!

Pal. In loving Zaphna, sure it cannot err;
 There's nothing wild; nothing pernicious—

Mah. How!
 This theme delights you—

Pal. I must own it does.
 Yes, my great master; for I still have thought
 That heav'n itself approv'd of my affection,
 And gave a sanction to our mutual ardours.
 From heav'n, you oft' have told us, ev'ry bent
 And proper tendency of nature springs,
 Heav'n knows not change; how can it then to-day
 Condemn a passion yester's sun approv'd?
 Can what was virtue once be now a crime?
 Can I be guilty—

Mah. Yes—toward me you are—
 You! nurs'd from infancy beneath my eye,
 Child of my care, and pupil of my faith!
 You, whom my partial fondness still distinguish'd
 From all the captive youth that grac'd my triumphs;
 And you, who now, without my leave, permit
 A slave to bear thee from my sight for ever.

Pal. No, we both live, nay more, would die for thee:
 And, O my Lord, if all that earth can offer
 Of grandeur, opulence, or pleasure, e'er
 Shall make me deaf to gratitude's demands,
 May Zaphna's self be evidence against me.

And

And plead for double vengeance on my treach'ry.

Mah. apart. Zaphna again! furies, I shall relapse!
And make her witness of my weakness.

Pal. Sir! What sudden start of passion arms that eye?

Mah. O, nothing; pray retire a while; take courage,
I'm not at all displeas'd; 'twas but to sound
The depth of thy young heart. I praise thy choice.
Trust then thy dearest int'rest to my bosom;
But know, your fate depends on your obedience.
If I have been a guardian to your youth,
If all my lavish bounties past, weigh aught,
Deserve the future blessings which await you.
Howe'er the voice of heav'n dispose of Zaphna,
Confirm him in the path where duty leads,
That he may keep his vow, and merit thee.

Pal. Distrust him not, my sov'reign, noble Zaphna
Disdains to lag in love or glory's course.

Mah. Enough of words——

Pal. As, boldly, I've avow'd
The love I bear that hero at your feet,
I'll now to him, and fire his gen'rous breast,
To prove the duty he has sworn to thee. [*Exit Palmira.*]

MAHOMET *alone.*

Mah. Confusion! must I, spite o' me, be made
The confidant of her incestuous passion?
What could I say? such sweet simplicity
Lur'd down my rage, and innocently wing'd
The arrow through my heart. And shall I bear this!
Be made the sport of curst Alcanor's house;
Check'd in my rapid progress by the fire,
Supplanted in my love by his rash boy,
And made a gentle pander to the daughter?
Perdition on the whole detested race!

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. Now, Mahomet's the time to seize on Mecca,
Crush this Alcanor, and enjoy Palmira,
This night the old enthusiast offers incense
To his vain gods in sacred Caaba,
Zaphna, who flames with zeal for heav'n and thee.

May

May be won o'er to seize that lucky moment.

Mah. He shall; it must be so; he's born to act
The glorious crime; and let him be, at once,
The instrument and victim of the murder.
My law, my love, my vengeance, my own safety,
Have doom'd it so.—But Mirvan, dost thou think
His youthful courage, nurs'd in superstition,
Can e'er be work'd——

Mir. I tell thee, Mahomet,
He's tutor'd to accomplish thy design.
Palmira too, who thinks thy will is heav'n's,
Will nerve his arm to execute thy pleasure.
Love and enthusiasm blind her youth:
They're still most zealous who're most ignorant.

Mah. Dost thou engage him by a solemn vow?

Mir. I did, with all th' enthusiastic pomp
Thy law enjoins; then gave him, as from thee,
A consecrated sword to act thy will.
O, he is burning with religious fury!
But hold, he comes——

Enter ZAPHNA.

Mah. Child of that awful and tremendous pow'r,
Whose laws I publish, whose behests proclaim,
Listen, whilst I unfold his sacred will.

'Tis thine to vindicate his ways to man,

'Tis thine his injur'd worship to avenge.

Zaph. Thou lord of nations, delegate of heav'n,
Sent to shed day o'er the benighted world,
O say, in what can Zaphna prove his duty?
Instruct me how a frail earth-prison'd mortal
Can or avenge or vindicate a god.

Mah. By thy weak arm he deigns to prove his cause;
And launch his vengeance on blaspheming rebels.

Zaph. What glorious action, what illustrious danger
Does that supreme, whose image thou, demand?

Place me, O place me, in the front of battle,

'Gainst odds innumerable; try me there.

Or, if a single combat claim my might,

The stoutest Arab may step forth, and see

If Zaphna fail to greet him as he ought.

Mah. O greatly said, my son; 'tis inspiration!

But

But heed me ; 'tis not by a glaring act
Of human valour, heav'n has will'd to prove thee ;
This infidels themselves may boast, when led
By ostentation, rage, or brute-like rascals,
To do whate'er heav'n gives in sacred charge,
Nor dare to sound its fathomless decrees,
This, and this only's meritorious zeal.
Attend, adore, obey ; thou shalt be arm'd
By death's remorseless angel, which awaits me.

Zaph. Speak out, pronounce : what victim must I
offer?

What tyrant, sacrifice? whose blood requir'st thou?

Mah. The blood of a detested infidel,
A murderer, a foe to heav'n and me.
A wretch who slew my child, blasphemes my god,
And like a huge Colossus bears a world
Of impious opposition to my faith ;
The blood of curst Alcanor.

Zaph. I! — Alcanor!

Mah. What! dost thou hesitate? rash youth, beware;
He that deliberates is sacrilegious.
Far, far from me be those audacious mortals,
Who for themselves would impiously judge,
Or see with their own eyes; who dares to think,
Was never born a proselyte for me.
Know who I am: know, on this very spot,
I've charg'd thee with the just decree of heav'n.
And when that heav'n requires of thee no more
Than the bare off'ring of its deadliest foe,
Nay, thy foe too, and mine, why thou dost balance,
As thy own father were the victim claim'd!
Go, vile idolater, false Mussulman,
Go seek another master; a new faith.

Zaph. O Mahomet —

Mah. Just when the prize is ready,
When fair Palmira's destin'd to thy arms —
But what's Palmira? or what's heav'n to thee,
Thou poor, weak rebel to thy faith and love?
Go, serve and cringe to our detested foe.

Zaph. O pardon, Mahomet; methinks I hear
The oracle of heav'n — it shall be done.

Mah. Obey then, strike, and for his impious blood,
Palmira's

Palmira's charms and paradise be thine.

[*Apart to Mirvan.*] Mirvan, attend him close, and let
thy eyes

Be fix'd on ev'ry movement of his soul.

[*Exit.*]

ZAPHNA alone.

Zaph. Soft, let me think—this duty wears the face
Of something more than monstrous—pardon heav'n!
To sacrifice an innocent old man,
Weigh'd down with age, unsuccour'd, and unarm'd,
When I am hostage for his safety too——
No matter, heav'n has chose me for the duty,
My vow is pass'd and must be straight fulfill'd.
Ye stern, relentless ministers of wrath,
Spirits of vengeance, by whose ruthless hands
The haughty tyrants of the earth have bled,
Come to my succour; to my flaming zeal
Join your determin'd courage; from this breast
Banish the stripling pity. And thou, angel
Of Mahomet, exterminating angel,
That mow'st down nations to prepare his passage,
Give me the scorpion's rage, the basilisk's eye,
That I may look, and look till I can murder.
Hah! who comes here!

Enter ALCANOR.

Alc. Whence, Zaphna, that deep gloom,
That like a blasting mildew on the ear
Of promis'd harvest, blackens o'er thy visage?
Grieve not that here, thro' form, thou art confin'd:
I hold thee not as hostage, but as friend,
And make thy safety partner with my own.

Zaph. apart.] And make my safety partner with
thy own!

Alc. The bloody carnage, by this truce suspended,
For a few moments, like a torrent check'd
In its full flow, will with redoubled strength
Bear all before it.—I must say no more;
But, Zaphna, trust me this, my heart is touch'd
To think that thou'rt in Mecca, 'midst thy foes,
Sworn foes to Mahomet, and all his friends,
For when confusion reigns, and insurrection,

With

With indiscriminating fury, stalks
Through ev'ry street, what mercy can be hop'd?
In this impending scene of public horror,
Be then, dear youth, these mansions thy asylum.
I'll be thy hostage now, and with my life
Will answer that no mischief shall befall thee.
I know not why, but thou art precious to me.

Zaph. Heav'n, duty, gratitude, humanity! [*Apert.*
What didst thou say, Alcanor? didst thou say,
That thy own roof should shield me from the tempest?
That thy own life stood hostage for my safety?

Alc. Why thus amaz'd at my compassion for thee?
I am a man myself, and that's enough
To make me feel the woes of other men,
And labour to redress 'em. — Sacred powers,
Root from the fair creation those dire fiends,
Who place their joy in plunder and oppression.

Zaph. apart.] What melody these accents make!
my soul

Turns its each faculty into attention;
And whilst my own religion spurs to murder,
His precepts of humanity prevail.
[*To Alc.*] Can then a foe to Mah'met's sacred law,
Be virtue's friend?

Alc. Thou know'st but little, Zaphna,
If thou dost think true virtue is confin'd
To climes or systems; no, it flows spontaneous,
Like life's warm stream throughout the whole crea-
tion,

And beats the pulse of ev'ry healthful heart.
Thy tender spirit, by this tyrant form'd,
Holds all but Mussulmen for criminals.
Thou look'st on me with horror, ere thou know'st me;
Whilst barb'rous prejudice, with yoke of iron,
Weighs down thy reason, warps thy honest soul,
And turns thy actions counter to thy will.
How canst thou, Zaphna; worship for thy god
A being claiming cruelty and murders
From his adorers? such is thy master's god —

Zaph. apart.] O my relenting soul! thou'rt almost
thaw'd
From thy resolve. — I pray you, Sir, no more;
Talk

Talk me not into treason against heav'n,
And Mahomet at once. [*apart.*] Peace, reason, peace!
Oft has our prophet said, thy earth-sprung dictates,
Like the bewild'ring meteor of the night,
Deludes the wretch who trusts their flatt'ring shine.

Alc. apart.] The more I view him, talk with him,
observe

His understanding tow'ring 'bove his age;
His candor, which ev'n bigotry can't smother;
And all the radiant undissembled virtues
Which emanate from his accomplish'd soul;
The more my breast takes int'rest in his welfare.

[*To Zaphna.*] Zaphna, come near—I oft have thought
to ask thee,

To whom thou ow'st thy birth; whose gen'rous blood
Swells thy young veins, and mantles at thy heart.

Zaph. That dwells in darkness, no one friendly beam
E'er gave me glimpse from whom I am descended.
The camp of godlike Mahomet has been
My cradle, and my country; whilst of all
His captive infants no one more has shar'd
The sun-shine of his clemency and care.

Alc. I do not blame thy gratitude, young man.
But why was Mahomet thy benefactor?
Why was not I? I envy him that glory.
Heav'ns! it reflects such lustre on himself,
As half atones for his atrocious crimes.
Why then, this impious man has been a father
Alike to thee, and to the fair Palmira.

Zaph. Oh!

Alc. What's the cause, my Zaphna, of that sigh,
And all that language of a smother'd anguish?
Why didst thou snatch away thy cordial eye,
That shone on me before?

Zaph. apart.] O my torn heart!
Palmira's name revives the racking thought
Of my near blunted purpose.

Alc. Come, my friend:
The flood-gates of destruction soon thrown ope,
Will pour in ruin on that curse of nations.
If I can save but thee, and fair Palmira
From this o'erflowing tide, let all the rest

Of his abandon'd minions be the victims
For your deliverance——I must save your blood.

Zaph. apart.] Just heav'n! and is't not I must shed
his blood?

Alc. Nay, tremble, if thou dar'st to hesitate——
Follow me straight.

Enter PHARON.

Pha. Alcanor read that letter,
Put in my hands this moment by an Arab
With outmost stealth, and air bespeaking somewhat
Of high importance.

Alc. reads.] Whence is this?——Hercides!
Cautious, my eyes! be sure you're not mistaken
In what you here insinuate. Gracious heav'n!
Will then thy providence at length o'er-rule
My wayward fate, and by one matchless blessing,
Sweeten the suff'rings of a threescore years!

[After looking, for some time, earnestly at Zaphna.
Follow me.

Zaph. Thee!——But Mahomet——

Alc. Thy life
And all its future bliss dwells on this moment.
Follow, I say. *[Exit Alcanor and Pharon.]*

*Enter MIRVAN and his attendants hastily on the other side
of the stage.*

Mir. to Zaph.] Traitor, turn back; what means
This conference with the foe? To Mahomet
Away, this instant he commands thy presence.

Zaph. apart.] Where am I? heav'ns! how shall I
now resolve!

How art! a precipice on ev'ry side
Awaits me, and the first least step's perdition.

Mir. Young man, our prophet brooks not such delay;
Go, stop the bolt that's ready to be launch'd
On thy rebellious head.

Zaph. Yes, and renounce
This horrid vow, that's poison to my soul.

[Exit with Mirvan, &c.]

Re-enter ALCANOR and PHARON.

Alc. Where is this Zaphna?—but he flies me still:
In vain I call in all the soft'ning arts
Of pity, love, and friendship to engage him:
His breast is fear'd by that impostor's precepts
'Gainst all who bid defiance to his laws.
But, Pharon, didst thou mark the baneful gloom,
The somewhat like reluctance, rage, and pity,
That blended sat upon his pensive brow?

Pha. I did: There's something at his heart——

Alc. There is——

Would I could fathom it! this letter, Pharon,
His aspect, age; the transport that I taste
When he is near me; the anxiety
His absence gives, do too much violence
To my distracted sense. Hercides here
Desires to see me; 'twas his barbarous hands
That robb'd me of my children; they are living,
He tells me, under Mahomet's protection;
And he has something to unfold, on which
Their destiny and mine depends. This Zaphna
And young Palmira, vassals of that tyrant,
Are ignorant from whom they are descended.
Imagination's pregnant with the thought.
My wishes mock me. Sinking with my grief,
I blindly catch at ev'ry flatt'ring error,
And supplicate deception's self for succour.

Pha. Hope, but yet fear, Alcanor; think, my chief,
How many infants from their parents torn,
Ere conscious whose they are, attend that tyrant,
Drink in his dictates, place their being in him,
And deem him an infallible dispenser
Of heav'n's decisions——

Alc. Well, no matter, Pharon.

At noon or night conduct Hercides hither:
Thy master, in th' adjoining fane, once more
Will importune the gods with prayers and incense,
That he may save his friends, and see his children.

Pha. Thou shalt not find thy Pharon slack in ought
That tends to thy deliverance from this anguish.

[Exit Pharon.

Alc.

Alc. Just heav'n, if, by erroneous thought or act,
 I have drawn down your fierce displeasure on me,
 Point me to right; I'll onward to its goal
 With double energy; will expiate all,
 That in the days of ignorance might offend.
 Only restore my children to my care,
 Give to my craving arms my hapless children,
 That I may form them, turn 'em back from wrong,
 Weed their young minds of those pernicious errors
 The arch impostor has implanted in 'em;
 Train 'em in virtue's school, and lead them on
 To deeds of glorious and immortal honour. [*Exit.*

ACT IV.

MAHOMET'S Apartment.

MAHOMET alone.

Ambition knows not conscience—well, this Zaphna
 Is fix'd at length—I lesson'd him so home,
 Dealt to his young enthusiastic soul
 Such promises and threats——

Enter MIRVAN.

Mirvan, What news?

Mir. O, Mahomet, I fear the nice-wov'n web
 Of our design's unravell'd. Ere thy spirit
 Had re-inflam'd young Zaphna with the thirst
 Of old Alcanor's blood, he had reveal'd
 The dreadful purpose to Hercides——

Mah. Hah!

Mir. Hercides loves the youth, and Zaphna still
 Has held him as a father.

Mah. That, I like not.

What does Hercides say? thinks he with us?

Mir. O no; he trembles at the very thought
 Of this dread scene, compassionates Alcanor,
 And——

Mah. He's but half a friend then, and half-friend
 Is not a span from traitor. Mirvan, Mirvan,

A dangerous witness must be some way dealt with ;
Am I obey'd?

Mir. 'Tis done.

Mah. Then for the rest——

Or e'er the harbinger of 'morrow's dawn
Gleam in the east, Alcanor thou must set,
Or Mahomet and all his hopes must perish.
That's the first step ; then——Zaphna, next for thee.
Soon as thy hands have dealt the midnight mischief,
In thy own blood the secret must be drown'd.
Thus quit of son and father (those curst rivals
Who elbow me at once in love and grandeur,)
Both Mecca, and Palmira, shall be mine.
O tow'ring prospect ! how it fills the eye
Of my aspiring, and enamour'd soul !
Night, put on double sable, that no star
May be a spy on those dark deeds——Well, Mirvan,
Shall we accomplish this?

Mir. We shall, my chief.

Mah. What though I seize his life from whom she
sprung?

He's not her father as she knows it not.
Trust me, those partial ties of blood, and kindred,
Are but th' illusive taints of education :
What we call nature is mere habit, Mirvan ;
That habit's on our side ; for the whole study
Of this young creature's life has been obedience ;
To think, believe, and act, as pleasur'd me.
But hold, the hour, on which our fortune hangs,
Is now at hand. , While Zaphna seeks the temple,
Let us look round us, see that not a wheel
Lag in the vast machine we have at work.
It is success that consecrates our actions.
The vanquish'd rebel, as a rebel, dies ;
The victor-rebel plumes him on a throne. [Exeunt.

SCENE changes to the Temple.

Enter ZAPHNA, with a drawn sword in his hand.

Zaph. Well then, it must be so ; I must discharge
This cruel duty——Mahomet enjoins it,
And heav'n thro' him demands it of my hands,
Horrid,

Horrid, tho' sacred act!—My soul shrinks back,
And won't admit conviction——Ay, but heav'n!
Heav'n's call I must obey——O dire obedience
What dost thou cost me! my humanity!
Why, duty, art thou thus at war with nature?

Enter PALMIRA.

Thou here, Palmira! O! what fatal transport
Leads thee to this sad place, these dark abodes,
Sacred to death? thou hast no business here.

Pal. O Zaphna, fear, and love, have been my guides.
What horrid sacrifice is this enjoin'd thee?
What victim does the god of Mahomet
Claim from thy tender hand?

Zaph. My guardian angel,
On whose determination ever turns
The hinge of my elections; speak, resolve me;
How can assassination be a virtue?
How can the gracious parent of mankind
Delight in mankind's sufferings! mayn't this prophet,
This great announcer of his heav'nly will,
Mistake it once?

Pal. O tremble to examine.
He sees our hearts——to doubt is to blaspheme.

Zaph. Be steady then my soul, firm to thy purpose,
And let religion steel thee against pity.
Come forth, thou foe to Mahomet and heav'n,
And meet the doom thy rebel faith deserves;
Come forth, Alcanor.

Pal. Who? Alcanor?

Zaph. Yes.

Pal. The good Alcanor!

Zaph. Why d'ye call him good?
Can impious have fellowship with good?
Curse on his pagan virtues! he must die;
So Mahomet commands. And yet, methinks,
Some other deity arrests my arm,
And whispers to my heart——Zaphna, forbear.

Pal. Distracting state!

Zaph. Alas, my dear Palmira,
I'm weak, and shudder at this bloody business:
Yet the behest of heav'n, howe'er it seem

To cross on nature, or take captive reason,
 Is sacred to the will, and claims obedience.
 Help me, O help, Palmira; I am torn,
 Distracted with this conflict in my breast,
 I'd not be barbarous, nor sacrilegious;
 I find, I wear not an assassin's heart,
 Yet heav'n here bids me wear assassin's hands.
 Zeal, horror, love, and pity seize my breast,
 And drag it diff'rent ways. Alas, Palmira,
 You see me tossing on a sea of passions,
 An ebb and flow of contrarieties,
 Which now seem kindly wafting me to shore,
 And the next moment plunge me back again
 Into the bosom of th' outrageous deep.
 'Tis thine, my angel, to appease this tempest,
 Fix my distracted will, and teach me——

Pal. ——What?

What can I teach thee in this strife of passions?
 O Zaphna! I revere our holy prophet,
 Think all his laws are register'd in heaven,
 And every mandate minted in the skies.

Zaph. But then to break through hospitality,
 And murder him by whom we are protected!
 O! it makes reason stagger, will rebel,
 And the whole tribe of the exalted passions
 Rise up in arms, and combat with the duty.

Pal. O poor Alcanor! gen'rous, good Alcanor!
 My heart bleeds for thee.

Zaph. Does it bleed for him?
 Were Zaphna's fate as piteous as his,
 'Twould bleed for Zaphna too.

Pal. Canst thou doubt that?

Zaph. Know then, unless I act this horrid scene;
 Unless I plunge this dagger in the breast
 Of that old man, I must be more undone,
 A more forlorn, abandon'd, shipwreck'd wretch,
 Than earth e'er bore. I must——

Pal. What——

Zaph. Must, Palmira——

(O agonizing thought!) lose thee for ever.
 'This tyrant prophet (heav'n forgive my rashness!)
 Our royal pontiff makes this sacrifice

The

The price, by which I must obtain Palmira.

Pal. Am I the price of good Alcanor's blood?

Zaph. So Mahomet ordains.

Pal. Can cruelty

And love join hands?

Zaph. Alas, they must, Palmira,
If ours are ever join'd. Heav'n's substitute
Will give thee only to a murderer.

Pal. Horrible dow'ry!

Zaph. But if heav'n enjoins it,
If by this dreadful action I can serve
Love and religion ———

Pal. Is that possible?

Zaph. Thou know'st the curse our prophet has de-
nounc'd

Of endless tortures on the disobedient:
Thou know'st with what an oath I've bound myself,
To vindicate his laws, extirpate all
That dare oppose his progress. Say then, fair one,
Thou tutorests divine, instruct me how,
How to obey my chief, perform my oath,
Yet list to mercy's call.

Pal. This rends my heart.

Zaph. How to avoid being banish'd thee for ever.

Pal. O save me from that thought! must that e'er
be?

Zaph. It must not: thou hast now pronounc'd his
doom.

Pal. What doom?—Have I!

Zaph. Yes, thou hast seal'd his death.

Pal. What did I say? I seal his death! did I?

Zaph. 'Twas heav'n spoke by thee; thou'rt its oracle,
And I'll fulfil its laws. This is the hour
In which he pays, at the adjoining altar,
Black rites to his imaginary gods.
Follow me not, Palmira.

Pal. I must follow,
I will not, dare not leave thee.

Zaph. Gentle maid,
I beg thee fly these walls, thou can'st not bear
This horrid scene—O these are dreadful moments!
Be gone—quick—this way——

Pal.

Pal. No, I'll follow thee,
 Re-tread thy ev'ry footstep, tho' they lead
 To the dark gulph of death. There is no horror
 So chilling to the blood, not any anguish
 So bitter to the soul, but I could suffer
 With transport, rather than the single thought
 That Zaphna felt one pang I did not share.

Zaph. Thou matchless maid! — To the dire trial
 then. [*Exeunt.*]

SCENE *draws, and discovers the inner part of the Temple, with a Pagan altar and images. Alcanor addressing himself to the idols.*

ALCANOR.

Eternal powers, that deign to bless these mansions,
 Protectors of the sons of Ishmael,
 Attend the vows I offer for my country.
 Let Mecca stand secure amongst the nations,
 And stem the rage of rapine and imposture.
 Blast, blast this blasphemous invader's force,
 And turn him back with shame. If pow'r be yours,
 O shield your injur'd votaries, and lay
 Oppression bleeding at your altar's foot.

Enter ZAPHNA and PALMIRA.

Pal. entering.] Aft not this bloody deed; O save
 him, save him.

Zaph. Save him, and lose both paradise and thee!

Pal. Hah! yonder he stands—O Zaphna, all my
 blood

Is frozen at the sight.

Alc. 'Tis in your own behalf that I implore
 The terrors of your might; 'tis the last hour
 You'll e'er be worshipp'd in this sacred dome,
 This hallow'd Caaba, unless you swift
 Pour vengeance on this vile apostate's head,
 Who dares profanely wrest your thunder from you,
 And lodge it with an unknown, fancy'd god.

Zaph. Hear how the wretch blasphemes! So, now—

Pal. Hold, Zaphna.

Zaph. Let me go——

Pal.

Pal. I cannot——cannot.

Alc. But if, for reasons, which dim-sighted mortals
Can't look into, you'll crown this daring rebel
With royalty and priesthood, take my life.
And if, ye gracious pow'rs, you've ought of bliss
In store for me, at my last hour permit me
To see my children, pour my blessing on them,
Expire in their dear arms; and let them close
These eyes, which then would wish no after-fight.

Pal. His children, did he say?

Zaph. I think he did——

Alc. For this I'll at your altar pay my vows,
And make it smoke with incense.

[Retires behind the altar.]

Zaph. Now's the time. *[Drawing his sword.]*
Insulting heav'n, he flies to stones for refuge:
Now let me strike.

Pal. Stay but one moment, Zaphna.

Zaph. It must not be——unhand me.

Pal. What to do?

Zaph. To serve my god and king, and merit thee.

[Breaking from Palmira, and going towards the altar, he starts and stops short.]

Ha! what are ye, ye terrifying shades?

What means this lake of blood that lies before me?

Pal. O Zaphna, let us fly these horrid roofs.

Zaph. No, no——Go on, ye ministers of death;
Lead me the way. I'll follow ye.

Pal. Stay, Zaphna.

Heap no more horrors on me; I'm expiring
Beneath the load.

Zaph. Be hush! —the altar trembles!

What means that omen? Does it spur to murder,
Or would it rein me back? No, 'tis the voice
Of heav'n itself, that chides my lingering hand.
Now send up thither all thy vows, Palmira,
Whilst I obey its will, and give the stroke.

[Goes out behind the altar after Alcanor.]

Pal. What vows! will heav'n receive a murderer's
vows?

For sure I'm such, whilst I prevent not murder.
Why beats my heart thus? What soft voice is this
That'

That's waken'd in my soul, and preaches mercy?
 If heav'n demands his life, dare I oppose?
 Is it my place to judge?—Hah! that dire groan
 Proclaims the bloody bus'ness is about.
 Zaphna! O Zaphna!

Re-enter ZAPHNA.

Zaph. Hah! where am I?
 Who calls me? Where's Palmira? She's not here:
 What fiend has snatch'd her from me?
Pal. Heav'ns! he raves!
 Dost thou not know me, Zaphna? her who lives
 For thee alone!—Why dost thou gaze thus on me?
Zaph. Where are we?
Pal. Hast thou then discharg'd
 The horrid duty?
Zaph. What dost say?
Pal. Alcanor——
Zaph. Alcanor! What, Alcanor?
Pal. Gracious heav'n,
 Look down upon him!
 Let's be gone, my Zaphna,
 Let's fly this place.
Zaph. O whither fly! to whom?
 D'ye see these hands? Who will receive these hands?
Pal. O come, and let me wash them with my tears.
Zaph. Who art thou? let me lean on thee—I find
 My pow'rs returning. Is it thou, Palmira?
 Where have I been? What have I done?
Pal. I know not.
 Think on't no more.
Zaph. But I must think, and talk on't too, Palmira.
 I seiz'd the victim by his hoary locks——
 (Thou, heav'n, didst will it—canst thou will a crime!)
 Then, shuddering with horror, buried straight
 The poniard in his breast. I had redoubled
 The bloody plunge——(what cannot Zeal persuade!)
 But that the venerable fire pour'd forth
 So piteous a groan; look'd so, Palmira,——
 And with a feeble voice cry'd, Is it Zaphna?
 I could no more. O had'st thou seen, my love,
 The fell, fell dagger in his bosom, view'd

His

His dying face, where sat such dignity,
Cloth'd with compassion tow'rd his base assassin;
'Twould have converted thee to breathless marble,
And made thee, to futurity, at once,
A monument of cruelty and pity.

[Throwing himself on the ground.]

The dire remembrance weighs me to the earth—
Here let me die——

Pal. Rise, my lov'd Zaphna, rise,
And let us fly to Mah'met for protection.
If we are found in these abodes of slaughter,
Tortures and death attend us; let us fly.

Zaph. starting up.] I did fly at that blasting sight,
Palmira.

When, drawing out the fatal steel, he cast
Such tender looks! I fled——The fatal steel,
The voice; the tender looks, the bleeding victim
Blessing his murderer——I cou'd not fly:
No, they clung to me, riv'd my throbbing heart,
And set my brain on fire. What have we done?

Pal. Hark! what's that noise? I tremble for thy life.
O, in the name of love, by all the ties,
Those sacred ties that bind thee mine for ever,
I do conjure thee, follow me.

Zaph. Be gone——

Leave me. Say, was't not the destroyer, love,
Thar urg'd me on to this detested deed?
Had it not been for thee, consulting thee,
But for thy irresistible decision,
I had been deaf to heav'n, and spurn'd its order.

Pal. Why dost thou load me with this dire reproach?
O Zaphna, this is cruelty indeed!
Was not my soul abhorrent of the action,
As much as thine? did not I call thee back?
Didst not thou shake me off by violence,
When I hung on thee, would have forc'd thy stay?

[Alcanor comes from behind the altar, leaning against it, with the bloody sword in his hand.]

Zaph. Hah! look, Palmira, see; what object's that
Which bears upon my tortur'd sight! is't he?
Or is't his bloody manes come to haunt us?

Pal.

Pal. 'Tis he himself, poor wretch! struggling with death,

And feebly crawling tow'rd's us. Let me fly,
And yield what help I can. Let me support thee,
Thou much lamented, injur'd, good old man.

Zaph. Why don't I move? my feet are rooted here,
And all my frame is struck, and wither'd up,
As with the lightning's blast.

Alc. My gentle maid,
Wilt thou support me?
Weep not, my Palmira.

Pal. I could weep tears of blood, if that would serve thee.

Alc. sitting down.] Zaphna, come hither; thou hast ta'en my life;

For what offence, or what one thought towards thee,
That anger or malevolence gave birth,
Heav'n knows I am unconscious. Do not look so;
I see thou dost relent.

Enter PHARON hastily.

Pha. starting back.] Hah! 'tis too late then.

Alc. Would I could see Hercides!—Pharon, lo,
Thy martyr'd friend, by his distemper'd hand,
Is now expiring.

Pha. Dire, unnatural crime!
O wretched parricide!—behold thy father.

[Pointing to Alcanor.]

Zaph. My father!

Pal. Father! hah!

Alc. Mysterious heav'n!

Pha. Hercides, dying by the hand of Mirvan,
Who slew him, lest he should betray the secret,
Saw me approach, and, in the pangs of death,
Cry'd, fly, and save Alcanor; wrest the sword
From Zaphna's hand, if 'tis not yet too late,
That's destin'd for his death; then let him know
That Zaphna and Palmira are his children.

Pal. That Zaphna and Palmira are his children!
Dost hear that, Zaphna?

Zaph. 'Tis enough, my fate!
Canst thou ought more?

Alc. O nature ! O my children !
 By what vile instigations wert thou driven,
 Unhappy Zaphna, to this bloody action?
Zaph. falling at his father's feet.] Love of my duty,
 nation and religion,
 Inspir'd me with the rash, accursed zeal,
 To perpetrate an act more black, more horrid,
 Than e'er the sun cast eye on, than e'er tears
 Can cleanse from its foul stain, than e'er sweet mercy
 Can intercede for, or than hell can punish.
 Restore me, Sir, restore that damned weapon,
 That I for once may make it, as I ought,
 An instrument of justice.

Pal. kneeling.] O my father,
 Strike here, the crime was mine ; 'twas I alone
 That work'd his will to this unnatural deed.
 Upon these terms alone he cou'd be mine,
 And incest was the price of parricide.

Zaph. Strike your assassins——

Alc. I embrace my children ;
 And joy to see them, tho' my life's the forfeit.
 Kind heav'n thus mingles in my bitter cup
 So sweet a consolation, that I bless
 My destiny, and think the draught divine.
 Rise, children, rise and live ; live to revenge
 Your father's death.— But, in the name of nature,
 By the remains of this paternal blood
 That's oozing from my wound, raise not your hands
 'Gainst your own being. Zaphna, wou'dst thou do me
 A second deadlier mischief thro' thyself?
 Then thou wou'dst stab me to the heart indeed:
 Self-slaughter can't atone for parricide.

Zaph. Go on, Sir, pray go on : then I will live,
 Live to some purpose ; this is glorious suffering.
 Ten thousand swords had been a needle's point,
 To this most exquisitely torturing goodness:
 Blessing, where cursing's due, is cruelty.

Alc. Thy undetermin'd arm han't quite fulfill'd
 Its bigot purpose ; morn's at hand, the truce
 Is broke ; I hope to live to animate
 Our friends 'gainst this impostor ; lead 'em, Zaphna,
 To root out a rapacious baneful crew,

E

Whose

Whose zeal is phrenzy, whose religion murder.

Zaph. Swift, swift, ye hours! celestial charioteer,
Lash on thy coursers! light me to revenge!
Why linger for the day? flaming revenge
Is torch sufficient. Instantly I'll fly
Through ev'ry street, rend with my bitter cries
The cypress veil of sleep; sound such a trump
As might burst ope death's palace, and awake
His breathless guards. Then, then, infernal weapon,
[*Snatches the bloody sword.*]
I'll wash off thy foul stain with the heart's blood
Of that malignant sanctify'd assassin.

[*As Zaphna is going off, Mirvan and his
followers enter and stop him.*]

Mir. Seize Zaphna,
And load the traiterous murderer with chains.
Help you the good Alcanor.—Hapless man!
Our prophet, in a vision, learnt to-night
The mournful tale of thy untimely end,
And sent me straight to seize the vile assassin,
That he might wreck severest justice on him.
Mahomet comes to vindicate the laws,
Not suffer, with impunity, their breach.

Alc. Heav'ns! what accumulated crimes are here!

Zaph. Where is the monster? bear me instant to him,
That I may blast him with my eye, may curse him
With my last hesitating voice.

Pal. Thou tyrant,
Did not thy own death-doing tongue enjoin
This horrid deed?

Mir. Not mine, by heav'n!

Zaph. Not thine!

Mir. No, by our prophet, and his holy faith,
Of all the thoughts e'er harbour'd in this breast,
It ne'er had such a monster for its tenant.

Zaph. Dost hear him, heav'n? O most accomplish'd
villain!

Mirvan, look at me — dar'st thou —

Mir. Off with him, [To the soldiers.
And see him well secur'd, till Mahomet
Demands him of you.

Pal. Villain, hold!

[Laying hold of Zaphna.
Mir.

Mir. Away.

Zaph. Just, just reward of my credulity!

Pal. Let me go with him; I will share thy fate,
Unhappy Zaphna, for I share thy guilt.

But then ——— [*Looking back at Alcanor.*]

Mir. No more — you must to Mahomet.
Obey without reluctance; our great prophet,
In pity to your tender frame and years,
Will take you under his divine protection.

Pal. O death, deliver me from such protection.

[*Apart.*]

Mir. If you would ought to save the destin'd Zaph-
na,
Follow me to the prophet, you may move him
To mitigate his doom. — Away. [*To the soldiers who*
You this way. [*To Palmira.*] [*hold Zaphna.*]

Zaph. Pardon!

Pal. O pardon!

[*They are led off by degrees, looking alternately
at their father and each other.*]

Alc. What a wretch now am I!
Both from me torn, then when I wanted most
Their consolation.

Pha. Did you hear that shout?
The citizens are rous'd, and all in arms
Rush on to your defence.

Alc. Pharon, support me
Some moments longer. — Help, conduct me tow'rd's 'em,
Bare this wound to 'em; let that speak the cause,
The treach'rous cause, for words begin to fail me:
Then, if in death I can but serve my country,
Save my poor children from this tyger's gripe,
And give a second life to that lov'd pair,
By whose misguided zeal I lose my own:
What patriot, or parent, but would wish
In so divine a cause to fall a martyr.

ACT V.

MAHOMET and MIRVAN.

MAHOMET.

WRONG will be ever nurs'd and fed with blood —
So! this boy-bigot held his pious purpose?

Mir. Devoutly.

Mah. What a reasonless machine
Can superstition make the reas'ner man?
Alcanor lies then on his bed of earth?

Mir. This moment he expir'd, and Mecca's youth
In vain lament their chief. To the mad crowd
That gather'd round, good Ali, and myself,
(Full of thy dauntless heav'nly-seeming spirit)
Disclaim'd the deed, and pointed out the arm
Of righteous heav'n, that strikes for Mahomet. —
"Think ye, we cried, (with eyes and hands uprear'd)
"Think ye our holy prophet would consent
"To such a crime, whose foulness casts a blot
"On right of nations, nature, and our faith?
"O rather think he will avenge his death,
"And root his murd'rer from the burden'd earth;"
Then struck our breasts, and wept the good old man;
And only wish'd "he'd dy'd among the faithful,
"And slept with Ibrahim."

Mah. Excellent Mirvan!

Mir. We then both at large
Descanted on thy clemency and bounty.
On that, the silent and desponding crowd
Broke out in murmurs, complaints, and last in shouts,
And each mechanic grew a Mussulman.

Mah. O worthy to deceive, and awe the world,
Second to Mahomet! let me embrace thee. —
But say, is not our army at their gates,
To back our clemency?

Mir. Omar commands
Their nightly march thro' unsuspected paths,
And with the morn appears.

Mah. At sight of them,

The

The weak remaining billows of this storm
Will lash themselves to peace.—But where is Zaphna?

Mir. Safe in a dungeon, where he dies apace,
Unconscious of his fate; for well thou know'st,
Whilst at the altar's foot he slew his fire,
In his own veins he bore his guilt's reward.

Mah. I would be kind, and let him die deceiv'd,
Nor know that parent-blood defiles his soul.

Mir. He cannot know it: If the grave be silent,
I'm sure Hercides is——

Mah. Unhappy Zaphna!
Something like pity checks me for thy death.
But why—I must not think that way—shall Mahomet
Give a new paradise to all mankind,
And let remorse and conscience be the hell
Of his own breast! my safety claim'd his life,
And all the heav'n of fair Palmira's charms
Shall be my great reward.

Mir. My noble Lord,
Palmira is at hand, and waits your pleasure.

Mah. At hand! how, Mirvan, could'st thou let me
talk

On themes of guilt when that pure angel's near?

Mir. The weeping fair, led on by flatt'ring hope
Of Zaphna's life, attends your sacred will.
A silent, pale dejection throws her cheeks,
And, like the lily in a morning show'r,
She droops her head, and locks up all her sweets.

Mah. But now, Mirvan,
Assemble all our chiefs; and on this platform
Let them attend me straight. [Exit Mirvan.

Enter PALMIRA, with attendants.

Pal. apart.] Where have they led me?
Methinks each step I take, the mangled corpse
Of my dear father, (by poor Zaphna mangled,)
Lies in my way, and all I see is blood— [Starting.
'Tis the impostor's self—Burst, heart, in silence.

Mah. Maid, lay aside this dread. Palmira's fate,
And that of Mecca, by my will is fixt.
This great event that fills thy soul with horror,
Is mystery to all but heav'n and Mahomet.

Pal. apart.] O ever-righteous heav'n, canst thou suffer

This sacrilegious hypocrite, this spoiler,
To steal thy terrors, and blaspheme thy name,
Nor doom him instant dead?

Mah. Child of my care,
At length from galling chains I've set thee free,
And made thee triumph in a just revenge :
Think then thou'rt dear to me ; and Mahomet
Regards thee with a more than father's eye :
Then know, (if thou'lt deserve the mighty boon)
An higher name, a nobler fate awaits thee.

Pal. What wou'd the tyrant?—

Mah. Raise thy thoughts to glory,
And sweep this Zaphna from thy memory,
With all that's past—let that mean flame expire,
Before the blaze of empire's radiant sun.
Thy grateful heart must answer to my bounties,
Follow my laws, and share in all my conquests.

Pal. What laws! what bounties! and what conquests, tyrant?

Fraud is thy law, the tomb thy only bounty ;
Thy conquests fatal as infected air,
Dispeopling half the globe.—See here, good heav'n,
The venerable prophet I rever'd,
The king I serv'd, the god that I ador'd.

Mah. approaching her.] Whence this unwonted language, this wild phrenzy?

Pal. Where is the spirit of my martyr'd father?
Where all the odour of my Zaphna's fame?
Where poor Palmira's infant innocence?
Blasted by thee, by thee, infernal monster—
Thou found'st us angels, and hast made us fiends:
Give, give us back our lives, our fame, our virtue,
Thou canst not, tyrant ;—yet thou seek'st my love,
Seek'st with Alcanor's blood his daughter's love.

Mah. apart.] Horror, and death! the fatal secret's known!

Enter MIRVAN.

Mir. O Mahomet, all's lost! thy glory tarnish'd,
And the insatiate tomb ripe to devour us.

Hercules's

Hercides's parting breath divulg'd the secret;
 The prison's forc'd, the city all in arms.
 See where they bear aloft their murder'd chief,
 Fell Zaphna in their front: death in his looks,
 Rage all his strength. Spite of the deadly draught
 He holds in life but to make sure of vengeance.

Mah. What dost thou here then? Instant with our
 guards,
 Attempt to stem their progress, 'till th' arrival
 Of Omar with the troops.

Mir. I haste, my Lord.

[*Exit Mirvan.*]

Pal. Now, now thy hour's at hand.

Hear'st thou those shouts, that rend the ambient air?
 See'st thou those glancing fires, that add new horrors
 To the night's gloom? fresh from thy murd'ring poniard,
 (For thine it was, tho' Zaphna gave the blow,)
 My father's spirit leads the vengeful shades,
 Of all the wretches whom thy sword has butcher'd.
 I see them raise their unsubstantial arms
 To snatch me from thy rage, or worse, thy love.
 Shadows shall conquer in Palmira's cause.

Mah. apart.] What terror's this that hangs upon
 her accents?

I feel her virtue, tho' I know her weakness.

Pal. Thou ask'st my love! go seek it in the grave
 Of good Alcanor.—Talk'st of grateful minds!
 Bid Zaphna plead for thee, and I may hear thee.
 Till then thou art my scorn.—May'st thou, like me,
 Behold thy dearest blood spilt at thy feet.

Mecca, Medina, all our Asian world,
 Join, join to drive th' impostor from the earth;
 Blush at his chains, and shake 'em off in vengeance!
 These are th' endearments, these the cordial vows
 Palmira's grateful heart returns to Mahomet.

Mah. apart.] Be still, my soul, nor let a woman's rage
 Ruffle thy wonted calm.—Spite of thy hate,
 Thou'rt lovely still, and charming ev'n in madness.

[*A shout and noise of fighting.*]

Pal. apart.] Roll, roll your thunders, heav'n, and
 aid the storm!

Now hurl your lightnings on the guilty head,
 And plead the cause of injur'd innocence!

Mah.

Mah. My fair, retire, nor let thy gentle soul
Shake with alarms; thou'rt my peculiar care.
I go to quell this trait'rous insurrection,
And will attend thee straight.

Pal. No tyrant, no.
I'll join my brother, help to head our friends,
And urge 'em on—— [Exit Palmira.

Enter ALI.

Mah. Whence, Ali, that surprize?

Ali. My royal chief,
The foe prevails——thy troops, led on by Mirvan,
Are all cut off, and valiant Mirvan's self,
By Zaphna slain, lies weltring in his blood.
The guard, that to our arms should ope the gates,
Struck with the common phrenzy, vow thy ruin;
And death, and vengeance, is the general cry.

Mah. Can Ali fear? then Mahomet be thyself.

Ali. See thy few friends, whom wild despair hath
arm'd,
(But arm'd in vain,) are come to die beside thee.

Mah. Ye heartless traitors! Mahomet alone
Shall be his own defender, and your guard,
Against the crowds of Mecca.—Follow me.

*Enter ZAPHNA, PALMIRA, and PHARON, with Citizens,
and the body of ALCANOR on a Bier,*

Mah. Hah!

Zaph. See, my friends, where the impostor stands,
With head erect, as if he knew not guilt;
As if no tongue spake from Alcanor's wound,
Nor call'd for vengeance on him.

Mah. Impious man!
Is't not enough to've spilt thy parent-blood?
But with atrocious and blaspheming lips,
Dar'st thou arraign the substitute of heav'n!

Zaph. The substitute of heav'n! so is the sword,
The pestilence, the famine; such art thou.
Such are the blessings heav'n has sent to man,
By thee its delegate: nay more to me.
O he took pains, Palmira, upon us,
Religion'd us into such monstrous crimes

As

As nature sicken'd at conception of—
How could'st thou damn us thus?

Mab. Babler, avaunt!

Zaph. Well thou upbraid'st me, for to parley with thee
Half brands me coward. O revenge me, friends,
Revenge Alcanor's massacre: revenge
Palmira's wrongs, and crush the rancorous monster.

Mab. Hear me, ye slaves, born to obey my will.

Pal. Ah! hear him not; fraud dwells upon his tongue.

Zaph. Have at thee, fiend.—Hah! heav'n.

[*Zaphna advancing, reels, and reclines on his sword.*
What cloud is this

That thwarts upon my sight; my head grows dizzy,
My joints unloose, sure 'tis the stroke of fate.

Mab. aside.] The poison works;—then triumph
Mahomet!

Zaph. Off, off base lethargy.

Pal. Brother, dismay'd!

Hast thou no power, but in a guilty cause,
And only strength to be a parricide?

Zaph. Spare that reproach—come on—it will not be.

[*Hangs down his sword, and reclines on Pharon.*
Some cruel pow'r unnerves my willing arm,
Blasts my resolves, and weighs me down to earth.

Mab. Such be the fate of all who brave our law.
Nature and death have heard my voice, and now
Let heav'n be judge 'twixt Zaphna and myself,
And instant blast the guilty of the two.

Pha. Zaphna revive—what means this gen'ral terror?
They stand aghast, and tremble at his voice!

Pal. Brother! O Zaphna!

Zaph. Zaphna now no more.

[*Sinking down by Alcanor's body, and leaning on the bier,*
Pharon kneeling down with him, and supporting him.
Down, down, good Pharon.—Thou poor injur'd corse,
May I embrace thee? won't thy pallid wound
Purple anew at the unnatural touch,
And ooze fresh calls for vengeance?

Pal. O my brother!

Zaph. In vain's the guiltless meaning of my heart:
High heav'n detests th' involuntary crime,
And dooms for parricide—Then tremble, tyrant.

If

If the supreme can punish error thus,
 What new invented tortures must await
 Thy soul, grown leprous with such foul offences,
 As might make dim the very eye of day?
 But soft——now fate and nature are at strife——
 Sister, farewell; with transport should I quit
 This toilsome, perilous, delusive stage,
 But that I leave thee on't; leave thee, Palmira,
 Expos'd to what is worse than fear can image,
 That bad man's mercy. But I know thee brave,
 Know that thou'lt act a part——look on her heav'n,
 Guide her, and——oh! [Dies.]

Pal. Think not, ye men of Mecca,
 This death inflicted by the hand of heav'n,
 'Tis he——that viper——

Mah. Know, ye faithless wretches,
 'Tis mine to deal the bolts of angry heav'n:
 Behold them there, and let the wretch who doubts,
 Tremble at Zaphna's fate, and know that Mahomet;
 Can read his thoughts, and doom him with a look.
 Go then, and thank your pontiff, and your prince,
 For each day's sun he grants you to behold.
 Hence, to your temples and appease my rage.

[The people go off.]

Pal. Ah! stay, my brother's murder'd by this tyrant,
 By poison, not by piety, he kills.

Mah. 'Tis done——Thus ever be our law receiv'd! *[Ap.]*
 Now fair Palmira——

Pal. Monster, is it thus
 Thou mak'st thyself a god by added crimes,
 And murders justify'd by sacrilege?

Mah. Think, exquisite Palmira, for thy sake——

Pal. Thou'lt been the murderer of all my race.
 See where Alcanor, see where Zaphna lies:
 Do they not call for me too at thy hands?
 O that they did! ——But I can read thy thoughts;
 Palmira's fav'd for something worse than death,
 That modesty denies her tongue to utter.
 This to prevent——Zaphna, I follow thee.

[Stabs herself with Zaphna's sword.]

Mah. Slaves, seize her desp'rate hand.

Pal. Thou striv'st in vain,

[Reclining]

[Reclining on her attendants, and then laying herself against the side of the bier, opposite to Zaphna.]

To hold a foul resolv'd.——O Zaphna, brother,
We burnt not with so criminal a flame
As does that tyrant.——When the heart is pure,
Small is the difference, easy is the change,
A lover's passion for a sister's fondness.

Mab. What hast thou done!

Pal. A deed of glory, tyrant!

Thou'st left no object worth Palmira's eye;
And when I shut out light, I shut out thee—— *[Dies.]*

Mab. Farewell, dear victim of my boundless passion!
The price of treachery, the reward of murder,
Crown of my hopes, and fruit of all my crimes,
Sink with thee to the earth.——O justice! justice!
In vain are glory, worship, and dominion!
All-conqueror as I am, I am a slave,
And, by the world ador'd, dwell with the damn'd.
My crimes have planted scorpions in my breast——
There is remorse! is conscience then! O furies!
Here, here I feel ye. 'Tis in vain to brave
The host of terrors that invade my soul;
I might deceive the world, myself I cannot.

Ali. Be calm a while, my Lord, think what you are.

Mab. Hah! What I am! *[Turning to the bodies.]*
Ye breathless family!

Let your loud-crying wounds say what I am.
O snatch me from that sight; quick, quick transport me
To nature's loneliest mansion, where the sun
Ne'er enter'd, where the sound of human tread
Was never heard——But wherefore? Still I there,
There still shall find myself——Ay, that's the hell!
I'll none on't.—— *[Drawing his sword.]*

Ali. Heav'ns! help, hold him! *[Ali. &c. disarm him.]*

Mab. Paltry dastards!

You fled the foe, but can disarm your master.
Angel of death, whose pow'r I've long proclaim'd,
Now aid me, if thou can'st; now if thou can'st
Draw the kind curtain of eternal night,
And shroud me from the horrors that beset me.
O what a curse is life, when self-conviction
Flings our offences hourly in our face,
And turns existence torturer to itself. *[Exeunt omnes.]*

EPILOGUE,

By a FRIEND.

Spoken by Mr GARRICK.

*LONG has the shameful licence of the age,
With senseless ribaldry, disgrac'd the stage;
So much indecencies have been in vogue,
They pleaded custom in an epilogue;
As if the force of reason was a yoke
So heavy—they must ease it with a joke;
Disarm the moral of its virtuous sway,
Or else the audience go displeas'd away.*

*How have I blush'd to see a tragic queen,
With ill-tim'd mirth disgrace the well-wrote scene;
From all the sad solemnity of woe,
Trip nimbly forth—to ridicule a beau;
Then, as the loosest airs she had been gleaning,
Cocquette the fan, and leer a double meaning.*

*Shame on those arts that prostitute the bays!
Shame on the bard, who this way hopes for praise!*

*The bold, but honest author of to-night,
Disdains to please you, if he please not right.
If in his well-meant scene you chance to find
Aught to ennoble or enlarge the mind;
If he has found the means, with honest art,
To fix the noblest wishes in the heart;
In softer accents to inform the fair,
How bright they look, when virtue drops the tear;
Enjoy with friendly welcome the repast,
And keep the heart-felt relish to the last.*



